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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 001945

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND POLITICAL UPDATE: THAKSIN LOYALISTS FIGHT
BACK

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Alexander Arvizu reason 1.4 (b)
(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In Chiang Mai, around one thousand agitated Thaksin supporters disrupted the Democrat's planned rally last night, forcing the Democrats to cancel the rally amidst flying rotten eggs and cries to "get out." Meanwhile, in Bangkok, heavy rain poured on People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) supporters camped in front of the Election Commission (EC), dispersing many but prompting others to dance in the rain. The Central Administrative Courts ruled yesterday that pens should also be used in addition to the new, EC-required rubber stamps, addressing some of the concerns about fraud during the April 2 elections. End summary.

SIGNS OF THINGS TO COME?

12. (C) Democratic Party leaders were greeted by 1,000 to 2,000 pro-Thaksin loyalists blocking the entrance of their planned outdoor rally last night in Chiang Mai. Democratic leader Abhisit's speech was drowned out and cut short by loud jeers and angry shouts for him and other party leaders to "get out"; protesters burned Abhisit and key PAD leaders in effigy. Abhisit was finally forced to cancel the rally when the event turned violent and protesters began to pelt the speakers with rotten eggs and plastic chairs. (Comment: Chiang Mai (septel) notes that suspicions have fallen on the brother of a TRT MP and former mayor as the organizer of the mob. End Comment.)

MONSOON ON PAD'S PARADE

13. (C) In Bangkok, the PAD crowd marched from the business district of Siam Square to besiege the EC headquarters yesterday, demanding that the EC to cancel the April 2 election and calling for the resignation of the EC panel in general. The EC did not receive their letter of demand and shut their doors to the protesters. The PAD was preparing to camp out in front of the EC last night when the first of Bangkok's monsoon season rainstorms began. The rain sent many demonstrations scrambling for shelter while the PAD leaders attempted to keep the movement going by turning to open songs on stage and prompting the crowd to dance in the rain. But as the rain subsided, only the hard-core Dharma Army demonstrators remained on site. In the meantime, the PAD announced today that they will regroup for another mass demonstration to Government House on April 7, following the election on Sunday.

YOU GOTTA VOTE, YOU GOTTA EAT

14. (C) At a dinner for invited foreign election observers (including the US, Japan, India and the ASEAN members) on March 30, a subdued EC Commissioner Virachai described his "escape" from the PAD barricade earlier in the day by riding in disguise on a motorcycle. Virachai acknowledged to the assembled officials the uncertainty lying ahead after the April 2 polls. Virachai stated to Poloff that the EC will hold follow-up polls in constituencies where only one candidate runs and receives less than twenty percent of the eligible vote. As of the evening of March 30, there were an astounding 278 constituencies of 400 where only one candidate was running due to disqualifications. If the reruns are inconclusive, then additional polls could be held.

15. (C) Citing the earlier resignation of a TRT party list candidate, Virachai noted that the EC was looking at the Constitution to determine if seating less than 100 party list MPs would be allowable. He also said that EC is investigating allegations that the TRT provided money and other assistance to support fraudulent applications by candidates from smaller parties. Virachai said that it was impossible for the investigation to conclude before the elections as demanded by Thaksin's opponents. He predicted that preliminary vote results should be available on Monday, April 3.

PENS ARE ALLOWED

16. (U) The Central Administrative Court yesterday endorsed
BANGKOK 00001945 002 OF 002

the use of pens for ballot-marking in response to the Consumer Foundation Network's lawsuit against the EC. The group cited concerns that the EC's requirement to use a rubber stamp on the ballots may prompt a higher chance for election fraud. The court, however, ruled that limiting ballot-marking to only rubber stamps would be in violation to a citizen's "right to choose how to cast his or her vote," and thus required that the EC make both pens and stamps available to voters this Sunday.

STOP THE HARASSMENT!

17. (C) The Thai Journalists Association and the Thai Broadcast Journalist Association issued a joint statement yesterday calling for an end to media harassment. This was in response to some 2,000 pro-Thaksin "Caravan of the Poor" demonstrators that swarmed the Kom Chad Luek newspaper office yesterday, reportedly upset over an alleged slight to the monarchy. The Kom Chad Luek newspaper announced yesterday that it will suspend publications for five days and its editor will resign. In their statement, the Thai media condemned the protest as intimidation of the media, claiming that the newspaper had already taken full responsibility for the mistake. The statement denounced the protesters for involving the monarchy in the conflict and urged their media colleagues to take precautions against exploitation.
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